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STYLIZED GREEK RUNNER DASHES INTO 2004 OLYMPIC GAMES ON U.S. POSTAGE STAMP

PHILADELPHIA — At a special stamp dedication ceremony at the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, the U.S. Postal Service issued a postage stamp honoring the 2004 Olympic Games.

“Today, this stamp—much like the Greek runner it depicts—will travel on letters and packages to households throughout America and around the world,” said S. David Fineman, Chairman of the presidentially appointed U.S. Postal Service’s Board of Governors, and stamp dedicating official. “At the Postal Service, we understand the power our stamps have in celebrating special events—like the Summer Olympics—that help define our world.”

Also participating in the ceremony were Alan Kessler, Member, U.S. Postal Service Board of Governors; Dr. Judith Rodin, President, University of Pennsylvania; Jeremy Sabloff, Director, University of Pennsylvania Museum; Dr. Paul Todd Makler, Member, 1952, U.S. Fencing Team; Dr. David Gilman Ramano, Senior Research Scientist, University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology; and past Olympic athletes.

2004 Olympic Games Athens, Greece stamps are available at Philadelphia Post Offices today and at Post Offices and philatelic centers nationwide June 10.

Designed by Richard Sheaff of Scottsdale, AZ, and created by Artist Lonnie Busch of Franklin, NC, the stamp features a stylized depiction of a Greek runner and is reminiscent of the artwork on ancient Greek black-figure vases. Inspiration for the stamp came from a vase in the University of Pennsylvania Museum’s collection. On the stamp, the main figure appears in black; the same figure is repeated in red in front and behind the main figure. A classical design known as a meander or key pattern borders the top and bottom of the stamp. The Olympic rings appear below the denomination. Type along the bottom border reads, “2004 Olympic Games Athens, Greece.”

The first recorded Olympic Games took place in the Greek Sanctuary of Zeus at Olympia in 776 B.C., and were held every four years for nearly 12 centuries. Beginning with a single footrace called the “stadion,” the games grew to include other events including boxing, javelin and discus.



The Roman emperor Theodosius I banned the games at the end of the 4th century A.D., but after an absence of more than 1,500 years they were revived in Athens in 1896 under the guidance of French sportsman Baron Pierre de Coubertin. The Summer Olympic Games have been held every four years since then, with the exception of 1916, 1940 and 1944, when World War I and II forced the Games' cancellation.

During August 13-29, thousands of athletes from around the world will again return to historic Athens. Held in the shadow of the Acropolis and other ancient sites in the city, the XXVIII Olympiad will feature hundreds of competitive events in 28 sports.

Stamps featuring Olympic themes have been popular with collectors since the first modern Olympiad. To help finance the games, Greece issued 12 Olympic-themed commemorative stamps in 1896, and since then many nations have issued stamps that pay tribute to the Olympic spirit. Since 1932, numerous U.S. stamps have honored both the Summer and Winter Olympic Games.

To see the 2004 Olympic Games Athens, Greece stamps and other images from the 2004 Commemorative Stamp Program, visit the Postal Service website and view this news release at www.usps.com/shop. Click on "Release Schedule" in the Collector's Corner.

Current U.S. stamps and stationery, as well as a free comprehensive catalog, are available by toll-free telephone order at 1-800-STAMP-24. A wide selection of stamps and other philatelic items also are available at the Postal Store at www.usps.com/shop, and www.postalartgallery.com offers beautifully framed prints of original stamp art for delivery straight to the home or office.

Since 1775, the U.S. Postal Service has connected friends, families, neighbors and businesses by mail. An independent federal agency, the Postal Service makes deliveries to about 141 million addresses every day and is the only service provider to deliver to every address in the nation. The Postal Service receives no taxpayer dollars for routine operations, but derives its operating revenues solely from the sale of postage, products and services. With annual revenues of more than \$68 billion, it is the world's leading provider of mail and delivery services, offering some of the most affordable postage rates in the world. Moreover, today's postage rates will remain stable until at least 2006. The U.S. Postal Service delivers more than 46 percent of the world's mail volume -- some 202 billion letters, advertisements, periodicals and packages a year -- and serves seven million customers each day at its 38,000 retail locations nationwide.

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